

September 13, 2004

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it. I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people."

--- George W. Bush, September 20, 2001

UNDER THE DOME

Advice to the Governor

Governor Schwarzenegger is no doubt receiving plenty of advice from legislators, interest groups and individuals around the state who want him to sign into law or veto some of the hundreds of bills on his desk. While many of the bills awaiting his decision represent large social or political issues, some are just plain bad government and deserve vetoes for wasting taxpayer time and money. Some of these bad bills worthy of his veto pen are:

A.B. 2644 requires school bus drivers to turn off their engines within 100 feet of a school and prohibits them from turning on their engine any more than 30 seconds before departure. The goal is to limit the amount of particulate matter children breath. I have long been an advocate of clean air policies and cleaner fuels, but it is a silly mistake to believe we can drastically improve their health by reducing the few moments a day a child might breath excess bus fumes. It is also unenforceable and impractical.

A.B. 1825 requires employers with 50 or more employees to provide two hours of sexual harassment training to supervisorial employees every two years. The additional cost to state government is estimated at \$1 million and between 50,000 and 60,000 personnel hours. State law already requires employers to provide a harassment-free work environment; how they do that should be up to them. State supervisors are already put through 80-hours of training; we can incorporate any additional instruction that is necessary into that curriculum.

A.B. 2545 adds additional penalties to employers who do not provide employees access to exits. Again, existing law already covers this, obviously. The bill is another not-so-veiled attack on Wal-Mart and Sam's Club.

A.B. 2684 exempts non-profit organizations from the requirement to verify the citizenship status of people they are trying to place in jobs. There is much controversy

about illegal immigration, but this seems to be an open invitation to encourage those who do not have the right to work in this country to seek employment through other sources to skirt the law.

*****The Race for BoE Chair*****

The chairwoman of the Board of Equalization, Carol Migden, is running for the State Senate. She will win her seat, leaving the chair vacant. The chairperson sets the Board agenda and serves on the Franchise Tax Board. Rumors have already started about who will succeed her in this post. Democrats outnumber Republicans 3-2 on the Board, but we generally work in a bipartisan fashion and nearly everyone has voted for someone of the opposite party to have a run as chair. Controller Steve Westly seems to be changing that tradition. He is rumored to have declared that he will not vote for a Republican as chair, meaning me or Claude Parrish. Westly himself is not eligible to be chair because the Controller already sits on the FTB and cannot occupy two of those three seats, and the Migden seat will be vacant pending the legal question about whether her Chief Deputy can be elected Chair. That means Westly's vote can only go to John Chiang.

*****More Boards to Cut*****

Here is the third installment of the list of boards and commissions recommended for elimination by the Governor's California Performance Review: Air Resources Board, Board of Geologists and Geophysicists, Boating and Waterways Commission, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, Colorado River Board, Delta Protection Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Historical Resources Commission, Integrated Waste Management Board, Interagency Aquatic Invasive Species Council, Oil Spill Technical Advisory Commission, Off Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission, State Lands Commission, State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and the Structural Pest Control Board.

TAXING TIMES

*****Where You Live Can Cost You*****

This summer, Kiplinger's magazine published an interesting survey, the State of Taxes, which shows dramatic disparities among state and local tax bills around the country.

To make the case that where you live matters a lot when it comes to taxes, Kiplinger's used the most populous cities in each state, plus Washington, D.C., for the rankings. They started by assuming a hypothetical family of four with an annual income of \$90,000, which is about the median for readers of the magazine. Kiplinger's also assumed the family invests a certain percentage of income, owns a typical home for the family based on local prices, and buys 1,000 gallons of gas a year. Based on these assumptions, the best city in the U.S. to live in terms of tax burden is:

1. Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Income tax = 0

Property tax = \$830 (on a home valued at \$123,100)

Sales tax = \$1,250

Personal property tax = 0

Gas tax = \$140

Total = \$2,220

L.A. came in at #43 (out of 51)

Income tax = \$2,579

Property tax = \$4,200 (on a home valued at \$333,200)

Sales tax = \$1,650

Personal property tax = 0

Gasoline tax = \$180

Total = \$8,609

At #51 -- the worst -- is Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Income tax = \$2,979

Property tax = \$7,206 (on a home valued at \$186,500)

Sales tax = \$840

Personal property tax = \$1,352

Gasoline tax = \$250

Total = \$12,627

Other rankings: Las Vegas was #6 at \$3,744. Seattle was #10 at \$5,387. Portland was #44 at \$8,619. New York was #50 at \$11,078.

*****Helping Churches Fight Regulation*****

The Leonard Letter recently trumpeted a publication to help churches stay within the tax laws while exercising their First Amendment right to speak out on political issues. This week, I recommend a booklet from the Claremont Institute called "Faith-Based, Not Bureaucracy-Bound." The booklet teaches church leaders how to make their case to elected officials, and how to protect their rights to property and their ability to worship freely. Contact the Claremont Institute at www.claremont.org.

ISSUE FOCUS

*****Citizenship Test 11*****

Today's INS sample questions take would-be citizens from national to local government.

47. What are the 19th and 50th states of the Union?

48. How many terms can the President serve?
49. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.?
50. Who is the head of your local government?

BOE AND LEGISLATIVE DATES

September 16, 2004 --- Rosh Hashanah

September 23, 2004 --- First mailing of sample ballots.

September 30, 2004 --- Last Day for Governor to sign or veto bills passed by the Legislature before Sept. 1 and in his possession on or after Sept. 1 (Art. IV, Sec. 10(b)(2)).

October 2, 2004 --- Bills enacted on or before this date take effect January 1, 2005 (Art. IV, Sec. 8(c)).

October 4, 2004 --- First day to mail out absentee ballots.

October 19, 2004 --- Last day to register to vote in November's General Election.

October 27, 2004 --- Last day to request an absentee ballot.

November 2, 2004 --- General Election.

NOTABLE DATES/ HISTORY

September 13, 1851 --- Walter Reed, U.S. Army Surgeon who proved that mosquitoes transmit yellow fever, was born.

September 14, 1814 --- Francis Scott Key was inspired to write "The Star-Spangled Banner."

September 14, 1981 --- U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved Sandra Day O'Connor to the U.S. Supreme Court.

September 16, 1620 --- The Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, England carrying Pilgrims to North America.

September 16, 1782 --- The Great Seal of the U.S. was used for first time.

September 16, 1858 --- First overland mail for California.

September 16, 1940 --- Samuel T. Rayburn of Texas was elected Speaker of the House.

September 16, 1983 --- Arnold Schwarzenegger became a U.S. citizen.

September 17, 1776 --- Presidio of San Francisco formed as a Spanish fort.

September 17, 1787 --- U.S. Constitution was adopted by Philadelphia convention.

September 17, 1911 --- First transcontinental airplane flight, New York-Pasadena was completed in just over 82 hours.

September 17, 1986 --- U.S. Senate confirmed William Rehnquist as the 16th chief justice of the Supreme Court.

September 18, 1793 --- **George** Washington laid the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol building.

September 19, 1796 --- George Washington delivered his famous Farewell Address as President.

September 19, 1849 --- The first commercial laundry was established in Oakland, California.

GENERAL TAX INFORMATION

For answers to your general tax questions, call the Board of Equalization information center. Customer service representatives are available to help you from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific time, Monday through Friday (except state holidays).

Toll-free number: 800-400-7115
TDD service for the hearing impaired
TDD phones: 800-735-2929
Voice phones: 800-735-2922

To reach the Taxpayer Rights Advocate's office for assistance with any BOE issues, see <http://www.boe.ca.gov/tra/tra.htm>, or call toll-free 1-888-324-2798.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

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